

1914

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**MORE REVENUE FOR EDUCATION
IN ALABAMA**

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AN ADDRESS

**Delivered at the Annual Meeting of the
Alabama Educational Association
Birmingham, Alabama,
April 9-11, 1914**

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**A Survey of the State's Educational Conditions
and Suggestions for Their Betterment**

MORE REVENUE FOR

SOME one has said that the school is the cash, for manhood rather than for money, of Alabama for many, many years; a most drastic constitutional inhibition Alabama has really caught the breath of a new ambitions and ideals, and I come to you this patriotism, with all the zeal of enthusiasm, in the your consciences, and your conscience, if you please ought to be, we must have,—in the language

I believe that the powers that be are ready when we can once give them the assurance that increased to a maximum, and with this in mind, let

“Three trades are gained
Religion, politics, and
All others are by chance
Explained by those that
But every worldly, that
Can tell you how to

Some one has said that God first made idle immemorial tradition that school teachers are idle has blocked the progress of education all these

The world has thought of us, too, as an illustration wrote the following explanation:

“It was the most ignorant, vicious, notwithstanding army more than a school teacher of a surgical operation. I had rather prefer such a school as that.”

The trustees, however, made their report:

“We don’t want you to send us any more one was the limit. We have had enough with manners and learning, for the district

Did it ever occur to you that the world is

And yet, my friends, as I look into your finest choicest men and women,—I can but believe this judicial, and an attempt to conceal its own self

I had my first training in a one-teacher school teacher had its beginning in a one-room school and for the extraordinary term of three schools have had personal experience in almost every teacher, patron, citizen, tax-payer, and office-holder very plainly tonight in this family circle and on footing to advise about a question of the most one of us.

EDUCATION IN ALABAMA

stitution that stands for character rather than for
and under that suave and soothing delusion the citi-
re been lulled into peaceful repose and slumber by
at if I do not mistake the times, my friends, Ala-
life, is facing a new point of view and is stirred by
ening, fellow teachers, with all the earnestness of
ope that I may drive home upon your consciousness,
the fact that if we are ever to put Alabama where
ployed above, more cash, more money, more revenue.
ve us money as freely as they have given criticism,
ste will be reduced to a minimum and efficiency in-
turn the searchlight on ourselves for a minute.

for every critic fool,

ching school.

hest,

understand them best;

etic leech,

and preach and teach."

r practice and then made—school teachers. The
ctical, one-sided, deluded, misguided, pitiable cranks
rs.

ered class. When a certain teacher left a school, he

rhood that I ever saw. They need a missionary or a

Why, you couldn't give those children an idea short
rock on the road the rest of my days than to teach

bulldozing, broncho-busters for a teacher. The last
is rough, cross ways and manners. We want one
won't stand for any other kind any more."

times fair in its judgment?

tonight,—the faces of three thousand of Alabama's
he estimate the world has put upon us has been prej-
ss and lack of sympathy.

in this my native state. My first experience as a
he enormous, extravagant salary of \$25.00 a month
c months. During the years of my very brief life, I
e of educational activity in the state,—as student,
r. You will pardon me, then, if I make bold to speak
ence in which we have come together on the same
interest to this great commonwealth and to every

EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS



FIRST of all, let me say that any fair survey of what has been accomplished along educational lines in Alabama will show that progress in this field has been remarkable when interpreted in the light of conditions that have attended her history. Her wonderful natural and material resources have made her progress in recent years most phenomenal, and have added to the complexity of the problem of adjusting her educational scheme to her expanding wealth and ideals.

Again, education, like theology and law, has always been so circumscribed by precedent that the problem of keeping her educational machinery apace with her industrial institutions has been further complicated.

My predecessors in office have done heroic work,—patriotic work, if you please, and I wish here and now to say that any seeming uplift that may come to educational affairs and interests during my term of office will be largely a continuation and maturation of their policies, and therefore due much more to their initiative and foresight than to any special contribution I may hope to make. In fact, this administration must succeed or fail in proportion as it witnesses the consummation of those major policies for which my predecessors have so faithfully and untiringly planned and wrought.

And yet, in the face of the great advances in our educational facilities and in the qualifications of our teachers, and notwithstanding an expanding course of study that covers the entire range

of our "educational ladder," our educational development has lagged behind our social and industrial life. The gang-plow, the self-binding reaper, the steam-engine, the electric-car, the aeroplane,—in fact, even the agricultural machine in the humblest field, displays many more evidences of improvement than the one-room school hard by, which is still the prevailing, time-honored and cherished type.

They have told us over and over again that it makes little difference what kind of system you have, it all depends on the teacher. Far be it from me to even seem to discount the worth of my fellows, but no matter how well trained our teaching force may be, it can never do its best work without machinery, and in these modern times, the better the machinery the better the quality of the work. The chauffeur is needed to drive the car, to be sure,—but where is the chauffeur so reckless or so daring as to drive the auto across the country at a thirty-mile-per-hour clip without the machinery and the appliances which bring it under his control? All the men in America could not dig the Panama Canal with the machinery of half a century ago, but by carefully evolving instruments and machinery, together with the trained workers behind the machines to manipulate and control them, we brought it to pass that a comparatively small number of men was able to accomplish the task ahead of time and within the amount appropriated.

We must remember, too, that education is an ever-expanding, mobile, active, living, dynamic thing, and that the machinery and the policies of yesterday must undergo the white-hot temperature of public opinion and criticism, public need and national good, if it is to serve efficiently the world in its day. And it is the veriest display of selfish conceit on the one hand or a confession of the grossest ignorance on the other, for us as teachers and school officials to be satisfied with anything short of the most efficient system that

can be worked out in the light of educational history and progress.

There was a time when it was thought that the only way to shovel dirt was merely to shovel dirt; but by careful study and experimentation it was found that the best results could be obtained by employing a shovel carrying twenty-one pounds of material; further, that the number of movements used in handling the dirt could be very greatly reduced. The Bethlehem Steel Works was able, under the new plan, to accomplish with one-hundred-forty men as much work as five hundred under the old plan, each laborer under the new plan handling fifty-nine tons per day rather than sixteen, earning \$1.88 per day in lieu of the former \$1.15, and at a cost of handling each ton of $3\frac{1}{3}$ cents instead of $7\frac{1}{5}$ cents as before; and incidentally the company was able to save \$75,000 per year thereby.

The modern bricklayer, in the light of scientific tests, has been taught to lay three-hundred-fifty bricks per hour instead of one-hundred-twenty bricks in the past. Instead of the eighteen movements of his father, the modern bricklayer does the work with only five.

The balls in our ball-bearing machinery were formerly inspected by placing several of the polished balls on the back of the hand in the crease made by pressing two fingers together and in minutely examining these balls, as they were rolled over and over until the defective balls, irregular, soft, and fire-cracked, were detected and discarded. The girls employed as inspectors worked ten hours and more a day, and because of the extreme nervous tension, much of the supposed time engaged in work was of necessity spent in idleness. After careful observation and study, it was found that the girls could not do their best work for more than one-and-one-fourth hours continuously; therefore, at the end of that time appropriate periods of relaxation were given, and as a result, thirty-five girls were able

creased to eight and one-half hours. The girls were given two days of rest each month on full pay, and the cost of inspection was substantially decreased.

If we were to apply the same scientific management, the same test and measure of efficiency, to our educational machinery and effort, would we not have to admit that Alabama is still working away under an antiquated and out-grown educational system?

The newest word in education today is "survey," and I am going to ask you now to join me, if you please, in a survey of the real conditions that prevail in Alabama, in order that we may have some definite convictions about the need for more revenue.

Think it over as we will, the fundamental condition of improving our schools is first of all a better teaching force. A boy who stood an examination in geography one day was required to take an examination in grammar on the succeeding day. For some reason or other, he carried over into the latter test some of the "cram" that he had stuffed for the former. The question was: "Name and describe the zones." "There are two zones," said he, "the masculine and the feminine. The former is either temperate or intemperate, and the latter is either frigid or torrid." In this seemingly ludicrous and meaningless answer, there is much to make us pause. If we are to have trained, methodical, common-sense, business-like teachers who are to take the lead in community life and progress, our institutions of learning must recast their courses and vitalize their training. Boys and girls must be taught the things they need to do as well as the things they need to know. Instead of a barren profession, teaching must become a real calling, a service, if you please, much more dignified in char-

acter, much more permanent in tenure, and much more remunerative in returns.

This means better salaries, longer terms, higher social station, and the utter rout and undoing of the itinerant tramp teacher. Better salaries,—yes. Any exhaustive study of teachers' salaries will show that they have been to all intents and purposes decreased since the beginning of this century. A position which fifteen years ago paid \$600 is paying in purchasing power today the equivalent of \$416. Dr. Robert C. Brooks, the Executive Secretary of the N. E. A. Committee which prepared a report for the U. S. Bureau of Education, has shown that based upon prices in 1897, wholesale prices in 1911 had increased 44% over the year 1907, while retail prices in the same time had increased 50%, and that there has been a total increase in retail prices since 1897 of 62%. Suffice it to say that if we cannot fill our school houses with better teachers and better paid teachers, we might as well nail up the doors.

A second fundamental need that more revenue will relieve, is **better attendance**. For all these years we have relied upon voluntary patronage, the whims and caprices of parents, and we have a vivid picture of its results in our annual records. Of the 727,297 pupils of school age in Alabama, 428,625 were enrolled in our public schools last year, with an average daily attendance of 259,768. Looking a little more carefully into these figures, we find that one out of every four of the white children was not in school for a single day, and the three enrolled attended for an equivalent of only eighty-five of the one-hundred-thirty-three days that the schools were open; and that one out of every two of our negro children was not in school for a single day, and the one enrolled attended only sixty-one days out of the ninety-seven days the schools were open to him. These figures go a long way toward explaining our standing in the report of the Russell Sage Foundation, which has been published from one

end of the continent to the other, to our own embarrassment and humiliation.

I have an unbounded faith that the very slow but steady progress we are making from year to year in the light of an enlightened public sentiment, will sooner or later, somewhere and some time, solve this problem for us. In fact, if Alabama should continue to decrease her illiteracy in the coming decades by just the same number she has reduced it in the last census period from 1900 to 1910, we would get rid of our illiterates in just sixty years, but to depend upon such long-delayed relief, I think you will agree, is suicidal to the state and fatal to children unfortunate enough to have indifferent, sordid, or grasping parents.

There are still those who would question the state's right to compel attendance. The state has no right to levy and collect the three-mill constitutional tax and make additional appropriations for the purpose of educating her children and then permit that purpose to be defeated by indifferent and selfish parents. The parent has rights,—yes, but the helpless child has rights, too, society has rights, and the state has rights. No one denies that the state has the right to compel the parent to feed and clothe his child, and to compel the parent to fight for his country and shoot him if he should desert. No one questions the right of the state to carry the law-breaking child to the reformatory or to the jail to protect society. Has not the state as much right to carry the child to the school house to save him from that reformatory or that jail and to train him to be a producer rather than a consumer in his relations to society?

It is true that we would not have enough school houses and teachers to take care of the increased attendance should this law go into effect instantly; but not even the most conservative farmer would oppose an increased yield of his cornfields merely because his barn might not hold the crop.

Barns are cheap when compared with the quantity of corn they should hold, and school houses are trifles when children are to be trained.

Nor do I have any patience with that prejudice which would have hundreds of our white children grow up in ignorance lest the aspirations of the negro child be awakened, too. Is it better for both to remain ignorant or for both to become intelligent? Are we ready to admit that the ignorant white man can compete successfully with the ignorant negro, but the educated white man may not be able to hold his own with the trained negro? If the white man's boasted superiority is not sufficient to keep him well in advance of the ambitious negro, then civilization is a farce and education an hallucination.

We need a modified form of compulsory education. We are not ready for it to the fullest degree, and to flood our schools with an excessive increased attendance by plenary legislation, would be to deluge our school accommodations and to overwhelm our corps of teachers. Nevertheless, when we further reflect that the pupil who attends the average full term of school in Alabama and makes normal progress, will require ten years to complete the elementary course of seven years of nine months, and then at the age of eighteen years, if he began when the school was first opened to him, we cannot dodge the fact that legislation of this kind should be as rigid and as progressive as our ability to provide for it will make possible.

Alabama's third fundamental need upon which we may base a claim for more revenue, is **better organization**. Our fathers were agreed that an elementary school teaching the three "R's" should be established in every community. We have introduced many new subjects into the curriculum, but we are still circumscribed by adverse conditions and by our misconceptions of liberal culture. The state's call to the school today is to give equality of educational opportunity to the

child of humble talent as well as to the child of humble birth, and more; the school must learn to discover for the child just what his aptitudes and talents are and then train him for maximum efficiency in the struggle for survival and advantage. If the state conducts a school for the lawyer in the interest of justice, for the doctor in the interest of health and sanitation, for the engineer and the farmer in the interest of public utilities and better production, is it any less her duty to provide suitable training for carpenters, bricklayers, plumbers, iron-workers, and the thousand other vocations in the so-called "lowly" walks of life?

Everybody knows that the one-room school with its overcrowded course of study is not the type of institution that can best do the work it already has, and to make further requirements of it is only to aggravate the tragedy of the situation. As it is today, each little school provides the cheapest form of book education only, and spends itself in preparing its pupils for city life, for stations its pupils can never occupy, and for positions they will never fill, doing nothing to prepare for the activities of country life.

In the abandonment of the little one-room school except in sparsely settled and isolated areas; in the organization of intelligently planned and wisely located consolidated schools; in the making of these consolidated schools the centers of a new community life, lies in large part the only satisfactory solution we shall ever find for the rural school problem and the rural life problem as well. Only in such schools can the kind of education needed today be given, and only in such institutions will we be able to establish those rallying-points that will conserve and glorify country life. To expect such centers to be voluntarily organized is to expect the impossible. Most country folks will have to have an ocular demonstration to convince them of the value of the consolidated school. Instead of conducting it on the principle of carrying the poor school to the

child, the consolidated school proposes to reverse the process and to carry the child to a larger, better school with a broader and higher curriculum. It takes him from his home in the morning, lands him safe and dry at the school on time, and takes him back home each evening in the same condition.

The smallest school that can make any adequate response to present day demands is a three-teacher school. First, a principal who is skilled in agriculture, in elementary science, and in the power of imparting them; second, an assistant who is versed in domestic science, in manual arts, and in the power of imparting them; third, an assistant who excels in literature, drawing and music, especially vocal music, and in the power of imparting them. This school must have a room for each teacher, with a workshop, a kitchen, and an auditorium large enough to accommodate all general community meetings. It must be situated on not less than five acres of land, preferably more, with ample playgrounds, shade trees, flowers, school gardens, and demonstration plats. As part and parcel of it, and in order that the teacher may integrate himself into the life of the community the year round, it must have a home set apart for the use of the principal, and he in turn should board his assistants. This kind of school means better buildings, the consolidation of schools, and the transportation of pupils at public expense,—larger investments of money, to be sure, but altogether insignificant in comparison with the increased and compounded returns in efficiency and power.

But you ask is consolidation of schools and the transportation of pupils at public expense feasible in Alabama? A questionnaire was recently sent to every county superintendent in Alabama. Among other things asked was the number of schools that had united or consolidated during

Practically every superintendent in the state made reply. Four failed to answer the questions either from the fact that they were unable to give the information desired, or possibly that they failed to note the printed questions on the reverse side of the report. Nine said that there were no rural centers where consolidation could be effected advantageously under present conditions. Two of this number reported that consolidation would be practicable if pupils could be transported. Another two reported that the people were not quite ready for it yet.

These reports showed further that twenty-eight union or consolidated schools have been formed this year, and in more than one hundred thirty rural centers representing at least three-fourths of the counties of Alabama, the conditions were declared to be favorable for consolidation. They mean further,—if, in fact, they mean anything at all, that Alabama is not only ready for consolidation, but is even suffering from the lack of appropriate legislation needed to bring it about.

Have we any concrete examples of what consolidation can do for a community aside from those in some ideal location in some far away state that we read about in the school journals? There are three communities in Alabama where consolidation with transportation has been put into operation. Because of the limitations of time I shall only give you the facts in connection with the oldest one of these schools, though the history of the others would prove equally as interesting.

The school in Geiger, Sumter County, was first consolidated in September, 1911, and additional consolidation was effected two years later. Four schools were discontinued, two wagons were employed at a total cost of \$40 per month, and the aggregate distance traveled daily by them was fourteen miles. The following excerpts may be of interest:

Value of all buildings before consolidation	\$ 800.00
Value of all buildings since consolidation	16,000.00
Value of equipment before.....	150.00
After	1,500.00
Annual cost of maintenance before.....	2,000.00
Since	3,050.00
Average attendance of all schools before	32
Since	78

It should be noted that the total enrollment before consolidation was 66, or 12 less than the average attendance since consolidation.

Average length of term before consolidation	8 months
Average length of term since.....	9 months

How do the patrons like the plan?

"Well pleased. Not a complaint has been heard during the present session and only once have the children on a wagon been tardy."

How do the pupils like the plan? "Tickled to death. The wagon doesn't come quickly enough. The attendance has been 90% of the enrollment."

What do you think of the consolidated plan? "Its influence has been extended to surrounding communities and there has been much more interest taken in school work and its improvement in Sumter County."

But I cannot tarry to discuss the arguments in favor of consolidation and transportation, for they are as self-evident and as axiomatic as they are necessary to sound educational policy and social economy. Some one has said that the reason folks do not mind their own business is because they either haven't any mind or they haven't any business. The person who is bold enough to contend against a reasonable consolidation law in Alabama is grossly ignorant or manifestly unbusiness-like.

A fourth fundamental need that more revenue would provide, is **better supervision.**

In every other business, except teaching, this need is admitted. We understand full well that the shop must have foremen, superintendents, and managers. The department store must have its heads of departments, its buyers, credit men, and managers. The city schools recognized this need years and years ago. Have our country schools yet recognized it?

I believe that the office of county superintendent is the most important one in our educational system. Upon his shoulders rests the responsibility for the life and character of country schools. Right here in Alabama there are many of them who have thoroughly demonstrated a faithfulness, a zeal, an enthusiasm, and a devotion that would make us resent any legislation looking toward narrowing the field of his influence. Not only will I not lend my assistance to any measure that would interfere with the power of the county superintendent to influence for good the schools under his supervision, but I will oppose with all my might every measure which I believe will so hinder him in his work.

At the same time, we must not forget that the county superintendent is the integral part of the great common school system of the state and as a part of this system, he is enlarged and increased in his power for service whenever the system is so enlarged.

Never before in the history of our educational system has the call of the hour been so urgent for leaders of adequate preparation, deep social insight, large executive ability, and intense personal power for the supervision of rural education. And such men, once selected, ought to be given the same tenure, salary, and power which their brother city superintendents now enjoy.

Not until our counties cease electing their superintendents of education by popular vote and begin to manage their schools as a unit can the rural school fairly compete with the city school in its service to the state.

Under present conditions the would-be county superintendent of Alabama must first become a resident and a voter, must gain a standing in the dominant political party, must win in the primary, must outdo his opponent in the election, must pay his political assessment and campaign expenses,—all for a temporary and poorly paid political job, which, if he would hold even while he serves the people and the schools, he must always keep his political eye open.

The fault with our supervision is not with the county superintendent, but with the system for which he can in no wise be held blameworthy. The system, I repeat, is wrong, and no one feels this more keenly than the efficient county superintendent, who is trying to make educational progress.

It has been shown by proper census data that there is one expert supervisor in our cities for every seventeen teachers engaged in the service. This, too, where there is only one grade to be taught by a teacher, who is supposed to be an expert. How is it in the country where seven grades are to be taught by a teacher who is not reckoned even well enough prepared to teach one grade in town? In most counties in Alabama, we have at least seventy-five or one hundred teachers to the supervising officer. If the town where every teacher under supervision can be seen in one day, requires one supervisor for every seventeen teachers, how many does the country need where only one school per day can satisfactorily be visited and where only one day in the year has been all that the average county superintendent has found time to give? The town teacher must know the subject matter, the problems, and prepare the work of one grade; the rural teacher for seven. The town teacher is surrounded by a group of trained teachers with whom she may advise at any moment; the rural teacher stands alone. The supervisor is her only hope of relief. In the light of these conditions,

who will say that better supervision is not an urgent need in Alabama?

The law empowering county boards of education to place the superintendent upon a salary basis and employ him for full time with a further provision which authorizes the employment of an adequate number of assistants, is a long, long step in the direction of efficient supervision. The mighty impetus which has come to educational interests in thirty-eight of our counties is prophetic of the good that will come from this just law; but if we are unwilling to be satisfied with only a half loaf when we might have the whole; we shall have to depend upon compulsory rather than upon permissive legislation, before all the counties in Alabama are blessed with adequate supervision and supervisors that really supervise.

A great railroad system considers every mile of its track of equal importance, equal in its valuation, no matter how near or how remote from the centers of population and industry. It has the same amount and character of supervision for every mile of its roadbed and the same type and character of efficiency is insisted upon everywhere. Is there any semblance of sense or reason in our failure to require our school system to be so valued, so managed, and so supervised?

It is useless to expect the highest quality of service from our county superintendents, however, until we have placed the office upon a professional rather than upon a political basis. This done, make it possible for both men and women to be considered for the office; make the retention of the office dependent upon good service; open the office as a career for which men and women would be warranted in making careful professional preparation, and supervision in rural Alabama will become as close and effective as that which urban Alabama now enjoys. Then only will farmers and teachers cease moving to the cities to secure better educational advantages and opportunities.

In order to place county supervision where it ought to be, we shall require a county board of education composed of five members wisely selected from the county as a whole, and in such a way as not to change the personnel of the majority of the board at any one election. This board should have ample authority to manage the schools of the county as a unit except those under separate city or town boards of education, appoint the county superintendent of education, and on his nomination, the assistant superintendents and special supervisors, the clerical help necessary to properly take care of the business of the office, and a competent teaching force. It should also be clothed with full power to abolish needless districts, reorganize the educational system of the county according to some rational plan, consolidate schools and transport pupils, and in every other way exercise a control as complete as that of any city board of education.

To complete this work of supervision, we should have a state board of education very intimate in its relation to the county board of education, and exercising a legitimate sphere of power that will enable it to exert the same healthy and inspiring influence over the county board of education that the county board may rightly be expected to exercise over the schools. It should be organized upon a sufficiently broad basis to secure, so far as a central supervising agency can secure, the real results which the state sets before herself as the main business of education.

But my time is slipping away, and I must pass on to that supreme need which conditions the success of all other efforts to exalt Alabama educationally,—better teachers, longer terms, compulsory education, better organization, better administration, better supervision, better schools, in fact, all depend upon those who bear the burdens, if burdens they be called,—the taxpayers of Alabama.

A careful examination of the constitutions and statutes of the several states of this Union, establishes beyond peradventure the principle that a free elementary school education, at least, is the common birthright of every American child, and that the same should be provided by the general taxation of property without any consideration whatever as to whether the owner has children. In fact, more than sixty years ago it became a settled conviction that the "wealth of the state should be taxed to help educate the children of the state."

If we could only break through the shell of industrial activity and business enterprise which incrusts us, and contemplate the broad foundation upon which public education rests, what a delightful task it would be to convince the taxpayers of the state that the propaganda I am advocating tonight is worthy of their increased and continued support.

We laud those generous men and women who out of their private fortunes endow colleges and universities for the training of men and women, but we forget to sing the praises of the thousands of patriotic citizens of Alabama who contribute of their means to the greatest of all universities,—our public school system. If we could only get the taxpayer willingly to see that he is both a contributor to and a trustee of this great university, our public school, to which half-a-million Alabama boys and girls come up each year for instruction and help, we could be very, very sure that the school houses which dot the state from the Tennessee to the Gulf would never be closed for want of funds.

Property has no inherent value; in fact, it is altogether conventional and the creature of education. When the savage roamed at will over our hills, here today and there tomorrow, they were all but valueless. The same rich mineral treasure was here, to be sure, and the same productive power was lying latent; but not until the mind of

this savage had been trained and his social instincts developed, could he strike the fields with his rod of science and bring forth streams of treasured wealth.

Education itself, through the cultivation of primitive taste, has transformed the simple needs of man into intelligent desires, and along with this change there has evolved the demand for the transformation of crude material into the finished product. It is not too much to claim that every bit of value which attaches to our property is the creature of education, and we cannot escape the conclusion that value, which is the creature of education, should justly be taxed to maintain educational endeavors.

We cannot lose sight of the further fact that property would have but little, if any, value if it were not secure. Revert, if you please, to the time when might made right, and the strong arm could lay hold upon whatever it chose, and you will agree that the conscience and the judgment trained to regard the established property rights between mine and thine, are largely the creatures of education. The little red schoolhouse and not the official bluecoat, is the agency that has given, and still gives, to property its permanent value. The property of the state, therefore, should be taxed to educate the children of the state; for education is the author and the guarantor of that security without which property would be exceedingly unstable, if not absolutely worthless.

In any discussion of revenue, we shall need to keep before us the assumption that the chief business of Alabama educationally is to give the best possible advantages to each child in the state, and that above all property considerations are the interests of her sons and daughters.

While no two states have just the same laws for raising school revenue, there is so much in common that any one who will take the pains to study the situation may easily arrive at some rather general and well-attested conclusions.

First of all, a general or state tax is abundantly justified by theory and practice. The conditions in any state are so different, the occupations and industries so varied, and the wealth so unevenly distributed, that only by that pooling of effort which is made possible by a state tax, can any satisfactory approach be made toward equalizing the burden of maintaining public education which is for the general good of all, and in no other way can those higher educational standards be demanded on the part of all communities which no state can fail to require and yet maintain her dignity in this present-day era of intelligence.

In the second place, it is also a widely accepted dogma that the state should distribute aid only to such a degree as will not destroy local interest and community initiative. It is easy to see that we have reached a point in Alabama when the amount received from the state tax is sufficient to give certain counties in which the percentage of negro children is excessive, and under the plan of apportionment now employed by certain boards of education, enough funds to enable them to run their schools comfortably for eight months, while in certain other counties, in which there are but few negro children, it is with great difficulty that the schools can continue for even five months. To give the former more money would be to encourage waste and to inhibit, if not crush out, local effort and interest. To fail to make provision for the latter is to keep its children forever handicapped in an unequal struggle. It is here that state aid reaches its equilibrium, and any effort to require the entire state to contribute to the less fortunate county will most likely be vigorously resisted by the more fortunate one.

When this point has been reached, some other plan of raising revenue must be found. One way to even up conditions between these divergent localities would be by direct legislative appropriation, but the present condition of the treasury,

which makes impossible the release of an already large contingent appropriation, shows very clearly that no substantial increase in assistance can come from this source in the immediate future, and even if it were possible to secure such legislative appropriation, it would probably be neither best nor expedient to do so.

We defend a state tax only on the ground that it furnishes the most equitable plan for equalizing both the burdens and advantages of education. If we carry this theory of taxation upward to its logical conclusion, the time should come when the Federal Government will make an appropriation from its treasury for the support of elementary education. It is an anomaly that we have turned over to Congress our most fruitful sources of revenue and have imposed upon it the least expensive burdens. We boast to the world our love of peace, and yet of the eighteen billions of dollars expended by this nation from the time of the adoption of the Constitution to the close of the Civil War, sixteen and one-half billion were for war and the needs that grew out of war. Education is a national interest and should receive national support. This would tend to equalize the disadvantage in wealth which has come upon the Southern States as a result of war and the presence of a large negro population. Even were our wealth proportionate to that of other states in other sections, it would still require a rate of taxation here one and one-half times as great to give to our children equal advantages because of the necessity of maintaining a dual system of schools. I repeat that we should receive aid from the Federal Government, but only on condition that it can be so apportioned as to provide for its distribution by a state board of education or some other agency of co-ordinate rank that is in active and intelligent sympathy with the state's peculiar needs. This plan is also negative in that it makes no provision for local pride, endangers self-reliance and might encourage extravagance, graft, and paternalism.

If we follow this theory of taxation downward, we cannot deny the right of local taxation to any county in Alabama that may wish to vote it. With the county as a unit, it will still be possible to equalize the difference in educational wealth over a relatively large area and thereby make the town and rural community, the rich and the poor district, co-operate to the degree that their mutual dependence and relationship justify. The most casual glance at the map of Alabama will show that naturally there are broad areas which will always support a large and wealthy population, while there are other regions where population will always be sparse and the per capita wealth relatively small. Again, the location of railroads, mines, mills, factories, and other artificial agencies will tend to further increase the disparity between different sections. In all of these localities, there are children to be trained and schools must be run. The chief argument for public education is that it makes the strong help the weak. There will always be counties in Alabama to receive from the treasury more than they directly give. And it should be so, for only by such equalization of effort will it be possible to have fairly good schools throughout the state with no prohibitive or oppressive burdens on any one.

I have rehearsed these things to show you that the inequalities that exist between two counties are no more real than those that exist between two communities in the same county, and it should also be borne in mind that the increase in the tax rate on the wealthy community is relatively small compared with the decrease on the poorer community. There is hardly a county in the state in which fees or supplements of some kind are not required, and where this indirect plan of taxation is resorted to, it is probably never equitably distributed and is a constant source of trouble. The county tax would largely remove these inequalities and obviate the differences and hard feelings that often grow out of them. It would do more;

it would build up a local pride which must always be wanting so long as money is sent out from Montgomery, and by such a circuitous route that the source of it is lost sight of before it ever gets back home.

At the Department of Superintendence in Richmond, the other day, I heard Dr. Wallace G. Buttrick of the General Education Board, say that the best thing his board had ever done for the people of the South was to help them help themselves. The twelve million dollars invested in the South, said he, had through its stimulative effect on our beneficence, grown to thirty-eight millions. The policy of this Board, financed by the wisest business men this country has ever produced, is a fine object-lesson to us in Alabama if we will only see it. Shall we longer tolerate a constitution which effectively bars the way to any substantial effort to self-help and to its attendant benefits?

Over 72% of school revenue in the United States is raised by local taxation, the portion varying from 97% in Massachusetts to 24% in Alabama. We should note, too, that Alabama gets 70% of her funds from the state tax, while Massachusetts derives only 1% of her money in that way. And it is a still more significant fact that those states that stand highest in educational qualifications, raise at least half of their funds from local sources, while those furthest down the scale, and nearest Alabama, raise most of their funds in some other way. The justice, the wisdom, and the necessity of local taxation for educational purposes sufficient to supplement the state fund and large enough to encourage a due measure of local pride and initiative, cannot be successfully combated by any patriotic American citizen in the light of American experience and practice.

What I have already said justifies the conclusion that we must give to the local community, city or rural, the further right to vote upon itself

a modest tax for building and equipment. In a vast and overwhelming majority of instances, the people of the country districts must resort to the uncertain and antiquated plan of private subscriptions for building school houses and purchasing school furniture, or else go on using as school homes for their children old shacks and discarded church-houses which are uncomfortable, unsightly, and insanitary.

But no system of revenue is complete that fails to provide as good machinery for its distribution as it does for its provision. Our state tax is apportioned to the counties on the basis of school population, and the law says that this shall be apportioned in turn to the several districts so as to maintain the schools as nearly as practicable for the same length of term. This plan may work equitably within the county, and should do so, but usually does not. The practice is all too prevalent of giving the lion's share of the funds to the white schools and leaving but the most pitiable allowance for our negro schools. This custom will no doubt continue until driven out by a righteous public opinion, which is slowly but surely crystallizing. It may be further abused in that it places no premium upon effort, except the one to get every possible name on the census list; and because it fails to give any more consideration to a county that has an eight-months' term and enrolls 75% of all its children in the schools than it does to the county that maintains only a five-months' term and enrolls but 50% of its children, it is purely negative in its influence in stimulating local pride and initiative. With our county boards of education properly and wisely selected from the county as a whole, it may be that the state funds will be equitably distributed, but it will always be done without that stimulus to community effort that might be had if a more rational basis were found.

I do not wish to argue that our present plan of distributing the state fund is the best that could be devised, but I am of the opinion that inasmuch

as it does set apart a fixed sum from the state's bounty for each child and give it over to the county authorities, it at least recognizes that equality of educational opportunity is the right of every Alabama boy and girl. If this sum is not in turn distributed fairly to the different schools and to the different races, the fault lies with the board of education or with the public sentiment behind the board of education, and not necessarily with the system. At any rate, this is the law and we shall find it difficult to change until we have broadened our conceptions of duty toward an inferior race, and then, perhaps, we shall not need to change. The present abuse is due to the present administration of the law rather than to the law itself.

If we are to have local taxation in Alabama in the interest of local initiative and effort, we shall certainly miss the best it has to offer if we do not employ some other than the census method in distributing the funds raised by the counties. The census method would be unfair in that it would give the same reward to the district that maintains five months of school as to the one that maintains nine months of school; to the district that sends 30% of its children to school as to the one that sends 80%; to the district that crowds seventy-five children under one teacher as to the district that employs two teachers for the seventy-five children. And while it may not be said that this method encourages absence, it certainly does nothing to encourage attendance.

According to Dr. E. P. Cubberly, in *School Funds and Their Apportionment*, and to the Report of the Russell Sage Foundation, the consensus of opinion in America today is that school funds should be distributed on a basis that will take into consideration the number of teachers employed and the aggregate days of attendance of school children. The former recognizes the teacher as the main item of expense in maintaining the school, and places the premium upon the employment of a sufficient number of them to sat-

isfactorily do the work. There are some relatively large areas where only twelve or fifteen children could be brought together. There are others in which thirty could just as easily be collected. In either case, one teacher would be required. There are many one-room schools in most of our counties in which more than fifty children are being taught by one teacher, partly because there is not enough money and also because it is not possible through a county tax to stimulate the community to provide an extra teacher. The plan for all these years has been to divide the district and erect another schoolhouse, and oftentimes with state aid. The teacher basis would tend to place the emphasis upon keeping the school together and adding another teacher, and if certain restrictions as to size and distance from another school were placed on it, there is no doubt that the plan would work well.

The other part of this plan means that a certain per cent of the funds would be distributed on the basis of the total days attended, or the aggregate days attendance of all the pupils in a school. No one will deny that the school that continues nine months should be more effective than the one which continues for only five months, and in theory, at least, the child that goes to school 180 days in a year is more likely to be well educated than the one who attends for only 100 days. The latter clause, then, would give due stimulus to local effort to increase school attendance, and thereby lengthen the school term. In my opinion, it would go a long way toward coaxing people into sending pupils to school and thereby create a popular demand for compulsory education. Dividing the county tax fund into two parts, as it were, and apportioning one of these parts on the basis of the number of teachers employed, and the other on the basis of the total days attended by all the pupils, it would seem to me would be an ideal plan for the distribution of funds raised by local county taxation. The cities would receive proper reward for their longer

terms, and the country districts would be encouraged to lengthen theirs and to employ an adequate teaching force, and along with it all would go that pooling of interest and of effort that their mutual dependence would justify.

But even when we have levied a three-mill state tax and have apportioned it to the several counties according to the school population, and this in turn has been given to the districts so as to enable them to continue their schools for approximately uniform terms; when we have voted at least a three-mill county tax and apportioned it to the schools on the basis of the number of teachers employed and the aggregate days of attendance of all the pupils; and when we have further given to each district of reasonable area the right to tax itself to provide school buildings and equipment, there will still be several new but desirable advantages, 'as, for example, the consolidation of schools and the transportation of pupils, which the state should foster and encourage. In order to do this work, a certain reasonable and direct appropriation from the state treasury should be made available for the State Department of Education, or preferably, the State Board of Education, to expend in getting these infant enterprises going.

The plans and policies which I have advocated here tonight are not ideal and they may not even be best; but in the light of twelve years of faithful study, and from an impartial and unprejudiced viewpoint, and with no pet theory to prove and no distasteful one to exploit, I do believe that they furnish a platform upon which the state as a whole can get together without any too great sacrifice on the part of any section, and with a reasonable assurance and hope that we may write them into our organic and statutory laws.

There are just two reasons why after all the agitation we have had on local taxation for twenty-five years, we have made so little progress to-

ward securing it, that are of especial concern to you as teachers: First, the child never hears the subject of taxation discussed except in the home at tax-paying time, and then in the most censorious fashion. The child has it ingrained into him that taxation is an evil that is only to be borne if it cannot be resisted. If for a quarter of a century our teachers had been explaining to their pupils that it is a public duty and a privilege to pay a tax in support of the Government, rather than pass it over as we have done with the mere academic treatment of the subject contained in the ordinary Civil Government textbook, we would be rid of the false assessment valuations that are so prevalent and it would be entirely unnecessary for me to have discussed this subject with you tonight. The second reason grows out of the fact that as teachers we have not been able to agree upon a policy and then loyally work for it; and I suspect that if we wait until our own ideals become the basis for agreement, the relief we need will be delayed at least another generation.

While it is in no wise binding upon you to accept without question the legislation I would advocate, I do hope you will weigh the matter well in the light of the whole state's needs. If what I have said is in the main true, it will certainly not be in good taste for any educator or any friend of education to make sentiment against it by inflammatory speeches and arguments before those whose minds are already prejudiced against taxation, and whose opportunity of studying this problem is comparatively narrow. As for myself, I have an abiding faith in the people, and I know that in some good day, right will prevail. I have equally as decided a conviction that that which is commended by educational leaders everywhere cannot be far wrong.

Local taxation, my friends, is coming in Alabama. Whether it shall come at the next legislature, or at the next, or the next, or the next, depends in a large measure upon your own activ-

ity. If we ever get it, we shall have to fight for it. Our liberties which have almost been won in battles over taxation, can only be preserved by struggles of the same sort, and I beg you tonight to tiptoe a little, look over and beyond the confines of all narrow and selfish interests, cease distrusting the taxpayers of our common state, stop trying to preserve the antiquated and the obsolescent, and unite to give to Alabama an equitable and an adequate school revenue system. Will you not consecrate yourselves anew tonight to the cause of education and pledge to Alabama your loyal and unselfish individual and united efforts?

“Little, little, can I give thee,
Alabama, mother mine;
But that little—hand, brain, spirit,—
All I have and am are thine.
Take, O take the gift and giver,
Take and serve thyself with me,
Alabama, Alabama,
I will aye be true to thee!

Brave and pure thy men and women,
Better this than corn and wine,
Make us worthy, God in heaven,
Of this goodly land of Thine;
Hearts as open as our doorways,
Liberal hands and spirits free,
Alabama, Alabama,
We will aye be true to thee!”

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**Delivered at the Annual Meeting of the
Alabama Educational Association
Birmingham, Alabama,
April 9-11, 1914**

**WM. F. FEAGIN
Superintendent of Education
Montgomery, Alabama**

**A Survey of the State's Educational Conditions
and Suggestions for Their Betterment**

